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DEFENDANT PLEADS GUILTY IN CASE INVOLVING BRIBERY AND FRAUD SCHEME IN AMERICAN SAMOA

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Assistant Attorney General Christopher A. Wray of the Criminal Division announced today that Kerisiano Sili Sataua, the former director of the American Samoa Department of Education (ASDOE), has pleaded guilty to one count of conspiring to commit bribery and fraud concerning federal programs, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 371.

Sataua, of Pago Pago, American Samoa, pleaded guilty yesterday at the U.S. District Court in Honolulu before the Honorable Leslie E. Kobayashi. Sentencing is scheduled for Oct. 17, 2005, before the Honorable David Alan Ezra, at U.S. District Court in Honolulu.

Sataua, who also served as chief of staff to American Samoa's former governor, admitted to defrauding the U.S. Territory of American Samoa, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) and other federal agencies of at least \$61,000.

In his plea of guilty, Sataua admitted that beginning in 1999 and continuing until July 2003, he agreed to fraudulently award ASDOE contracts paid for with USDOE funds to his co-conspirators and their companies in exchange for his co-conspirators providing him with over \$9,000 in cash and goods. The ASDOE receives in excess of \$10 million per year from the USDOE and other federal agencies. Further, Sataua admitted that he stole and misappropriated food and goods from the ASDOE School Lunch Program that were supposed to have been used for feeding children in the American Samoa public school system. The A.S. School Lunch Program is wholly funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture National School Lunch Program and the USDOE.

Sataua was the fourth defendant to plead guilty in an ongoing investigation. He faces a maximum penalty of up to five years in prison, a three year term of supervised release, and a fine of \$250,000.

In a related case, on May 21, 2004, Fa'au Seumanutafa, former Chief Procurement Officer for the American Samoa Government, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii before the Honorable Leslie E. Kobayashi to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 371. The charges against Seumanutafa stem from his role in a conspiracy to pre-set the prices on several ASDOE contracts for bookshelves and library furniture for American Samoa schools. Seumanutafa admitted that he used his official position to approve and submit for payment from the American Samoa Department of Treasury numerous false purchase orders for which he received at least \$80,000. Seumanutafa is scheduled to be sentenced before the Honorable David Alan Ezra on Feb. 22, 2005.

In another related case, on July 23, 2004, Toetu Solaita, former Program Director of the A.S. School Lunch Program, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii before the Honorable Kevin Chang to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 371. The charges against Solaita stem from his role in a conspiracy to steal more than \$68,000 worth of food and goods from the A.S. School Lunch Program. Solaita admitted that he used his official position to approve his and his co-conspirators' theft of food and goods purchased by the A.S. School Lunch Program that were supposed to have been used for feeding children in the American Samoa Public School System. Solaita is scheduled to be sentenced before the Honorable David Alan Ezra on April 11, 2005.

In another related case, on Oct. 1, 2004, Patolo Mageo, former Director of the American Samoa Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii before the Honorable Leslie E. Kobayashi to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 371. The charges against Mageo stem from his role in a conspiracy to fraudulently award DHSS contracts. Mageo admitted that he defrauded the DHSS of at least \$40,000 by fraudulently awarding several construction contracts for the Women, Infants and Children government building and other contracts for DHSS, which receives in excess of \$16 million per year from the U.S. Department of Interior and other federal agencies. Mageo further admitted that he used his official position as director to approve the fraudulent award of the contracts in exchange for at least \$10,000. Mageo is scheduled to be sentenced before the Honorable Helen Gillmor on June 16, 2005.

According to the FBI, the Sataua, Seumanutafa, Solaita, and Mageo prosecutions are the first public corruption cases to be prosecuted by federal officials involving American Samoa in more than 15 years.

These cases are being prosecuted by Trial Attorney James A. Crowell IV of the Public Integrity Section at the U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Division, headed by Section Chief Noel L. Hillman, and investigated by the Honolulu Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Education Office of Inspector General, and the Department of the Interior Office of Inspector General.

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